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THE EDITOR

The relation of art to education is more and more discussed by school boards, and its importance becomes correspondingly more conspicuous. It is taking its rightful place among the three R's, and from the kindergarten to the high school the refining influences of drawing and artistic appreciation are among the most potent forces at work in overcoming our national rigidity and puritanical practicality. We need refinement; and the work begun in the schools of the nation, and carried on with perseverance and enthusiasm by instructors, oftentimes, if not always, able and well-balanced, gives an earnest of better conditions for the present and future generations.

We in America have an art inheritance from our Puritan and Quaker ancestry—and it is not to be wondered at that we are to-day what we are. Art has been something foreign to us, outside of our needs and enjoyments—something for the wealthy, and the few, never thinking that it might be for us just as well. One does not need to possess a picture to enjoy it. Appreciation of nature does not mean that we must “own the earth.” The sky is over all, the rain falls on the just and the unjust, and the sunset flames in beauty for him who will take a moment from the whirl of daily toil and care to contemplate its glories. Appreciation of beauty in whatever phase it may be found or considered means educating oneself to it. There is latent or natural taste, but it needs exercise and training. No artist begins a master. He thinks poorly, sees poorly, creates poorly. He climbs the mount of fame with difficulty, paying his toll at every upward step with fatigue of body and weariness of soul. It is not easy for the genius, kissed by Apollo; will it be an easier thing for us who are not to the manor born?

Good taste and appreciation for beautiful things come with study, and it is a very hopeful sign of our sanity and long-sightedness to give as much time to the study of the arts as we do in the daily school curriculum. Its cost will come back to us a thousand-fold in the future by a developed public taste; a taste which will demand public cleanliness, and attractive and artistic surroundings, as well as a refined appreciation for better things belonging to the home and private life.

The schools of to-day are making the citizens of to-morrow. It is our duty to train them in all ways better than we were schooled, if we expect progress. Much has been done; more is being done to make the public schools the fitting schools of American men and women. A work more important than this it would be difficult to imagine. Let all the sides of the child be developed, the æsthetic as well as the practical and commercial, and we need have no fear of the future. The nation that has the largest percentage of broadly educated citizens will be the ruler in the days to come.